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ABSTRACT

This document focuses on specific linguistic features that serve ideological functions in texts written in South Africa from 1985 to 1988. The features examined include: naming; metaphors; old words with new meanings; words becoming tainted; renaming or lexicalization; overlexicalization; strategies for resisting classification; tense and aspect; modality; voide; ambiguity; negation; indirect speech, free indirect speech, and direct speech; sequence; logical organization of a text; and turn-taking, interruption, and topic control. These examples provide insight into the relationship between language and the power structure in South Africa, and underscore the need for oppositional reading, which concentrates on how a text has been constructed and in whose interest. (MSE)

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CRITICAL LINGUISTICS: A STARTING POINT FOR OPPOSITIONAL READING

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Discourse is a complex interaction of a number linguistic elements embedded in a complex interaction of a number of social relations. This paper considers a range of linguistic features in an attempt to ascertain how they serve to position discourse. Each feature is isolated to explicate its ideological functioning and is illustrated with reference to texts produced in South Africa 1985 to 1988. This critical linguistic approach provides new questions to ask of discourse. New questions lead to new and different insights. Because readers are still left with the difficulty of interpreting these insights, critical linguistics can only offer a starting point for oppositional reading. The many South African examples provide some understanding of the relationship between language and power in South Africa and make self-evident the need for oppositional reading which concentrates on how a text has been constructed and in whose interests.

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CRITICAL LINGUISTICS: A STARTING POINT FOR OPPOSITIONAL READING

Discourse theory proposes that social structures determine the ways in which we speak and write. Discourses are shaped by the socio-political conditions of their utterance and by the social relations of their addressers and addressees. Because discourses are themselves social acts, they also help to restructure and transform the social relations and conditions which shape them. Critical practice focuses on how discourse is constructed and in whose interests. Where theories of discourse take a broad socio-historical view of texts, critical linguistics facilitates the de-construction of texts by focusing on specific linguistic features.

Most of what follows in this paper is based on the work of Roger Fowler, Bob Hodge, Gunther Kress and Tony Trew. Their work in Language and Control (1979), Language as Ideology (1979), Linguistic Criticism (1986) and Linguistic Processes in Socio-cultural Practice (1985) has laid the foundation for critical linguistics.

> The critical analyst starts out with the hypothesis that the text has some specific signification in social structure. (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 197)

These critical linguists suggest which linguistic features are likely to reveal that signification. An exploration of those linguistic features which serve to position a text contributes to the process of oppositional reading; such reading aims to 'sap power' from dominant discourse and to make people into resistant readers of texts.

This focus on linguistic features should not be seen as sufficient for the de-construction of texts. The features are simply pointers to the processes of legitimation, reification and dissimulation (Thompson, 1984: 131). The linguistic features also need to be seen in relation to the content of the utterance and to the socio-historical conditions of its production and reception. Where possible these extra-linguistic considerations will be included in the discussion of particular linguistic features but the

focus on the features per se will inevitably result in their being foregrounded.

Any utterance involves a linguistic selection. At a macro level this includes the selection of a particular language and of a particular variation of that language. At a micro level this includes the selection of specific linguistic items and linguistic structures. Systemic theory helps us to view any semiotic system, including language, as 'a network of interlocking options' (Halliday, 1985). Choice of one option necessarily implies rejection of other options. Because any selection directs our attention 'to what is present ... and away from what is no longer there' (Kress and Hodge, 1979), it is useful to consider the range of options from which an item has been selected. Using Saussure's concept of paradigmatic relations it becomes possible to consider linguistic features selected, in the light of what was not selected but might have been. Attention to what was not selected can help to uncover the silences in a text.

I shall attempt to illustrate significant linguistic features with reference to utterances produced in South Africa from 1985 to 1988. Although I would agree that the 'forms of the elements' should not take precedence over the 'form of the whole' (Volosinov, 1973: 77), it is necessary to isolate the elements in order to explicate their functioning. Discourse is of course a complex inter-action of a number of elements including a number of linguistic elements. The examples which follow have been mined from extended texts in order to suggest strategies for discourse analysis.

KEY LINGUISTIC FEATURES WHICH SIGNIFY THE POSITION OF TEXTS

6.1 CLASSIFICATION

6.1.1 Naming

It is important to recognise that classifications are made not given. A striking example of this is reported by

Spender (1980). Psychologists investigating whether men and women perceive figure and ground configurations differently, found that men tend to perceive the figure whereas women perceive figure and ground. These differing perceptions were then named. Men's perceptions were labelled as 'field independence' and women's perceptions as 'field dependence'. As 'independence' has positive evaluative accents and 'dependence' has negative accents, such classification favours male perception. Dale Spender says that with her feminist bias she

> could well have named this same behaviour as positive for females and negative for males. [She] could have described the female response as 'context awareness' and the male response as 'context blindness'.
> (Spender, 1980 : 165)

In the United States of America field dependence is now referred to as 'field sensitivity', in an attempt to remove bias which favours men.

Example 1

Crossroads township in South Africa has been named a 'squatter camp' by the government. Naming it in this way foregrounds its illegal and temporary status. Bantustans, however, have been named by the State as 'homelands', places of belonging. They are thus portrayed as the rightful 'homes' of different ethnic groups. It is in the interests of the State to name 'homelands' as legal fixed places of belonging and 'squatter camps' as temporary and illegal. For those people in the society who accept these semantic encodings, the State's practices of 'repatriating' people to the'homelands' and of bulldozing places like Crossroads are legitimated.

Despite the positive connotations of the word 'homeland', people 'repatriated' to the bantustans against their wishes, perceive them as dumping grounds and reject them. Despite the negative connotations of the words 'squatter camp', the people who live there are prepared to die to

defend their right to do so: Crossroads, established against the wishes of the State, is their home. Different people in the society respond in different ways to State terminology. What a word connotes varies according to the positions of those who use it.

'Homeland' is just one of the many words used to refer to bantustans. Others include: independent states, national states, dumping grounds. An understanding of the history of these words is crucial in order to understand how the classification selected signifies. 'Bantustan', originally a government term, is a pejorified term because of its association with the hardships and inequities of large-scale forced removals. The word 'bantustan' was dropped by the government and replaced by 'homeland' which naturalises and legitimates the State's policy of 'repatriation'. The choice of the word 'bantustan', now preferred by progressive speakers, encodes a refusal to accept the amelioration of 'homeland' and insists on the word that carries the full negative evaluation. An example of this use of 'bantustan' can be found in Resolution I of the National Education Consultative Conference, December 1985.

> This conference notes the imminent forced incorporation into Kwa Ndebele bantustan of thousands of South Africans in the Moutse district against their will.

6.1.2 Metaphor

In Metaphors We Live By, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate convincingly the way in which cultural assumptions are encoded into the metaphors of a language. We need only consider the way in which the metaphorical use of the word 'white' encodes positive values and the metaphorical use of the word 'black' encodes negative values in English, to gain a sense of the role language can play in reproducing dominant values.

Where writers from different positions choose different metaphors (signifiers) for a constant signified, the metaphors selected are a good indicator of a text's position.

Example 2

In April 1988, the South African Defence Force entered Botswana to destroy African National Congress guerrilla bases. The Minister of Defence described them as 'surgeons'.

> Terrorists originating from Zimbabwe used Botswana as a transit zone. The action was like a surgeon's incision against the ANC with minimum force to achieve maximum advantage. (Magnus Malan, quoted in The Weekly Mail, 8 April 1988)

Anton Harber, writing for The Weekly Mail, likened the raiders to Rambo.

> South Africa's Rambos - the cross-border raiders who swept into Botswana last week - went to eliminate African National Congress guerrillas. All they hit were innocent civilians and an ordinary house, according to the Gaborone government. (The Weekly Mail, 8 April 1988)

These two opposing metaphors signal clearly the different positions of the two addressers.

6.1.3 Old words acquire new meanings

Often words acquire meanings that are specific to a socio-historical context. 'Homeland' is one example. When writing for an overseas audience one becomes aware of the number of words it is necessary to contextualise.

Example 3

'Open' has a peculiarly South African meaning. Open schools, open universities, open cinemas all refer to their being open to all race groups i.e. not racially segregated.

Example 4

In English, where there are two mutually exclusive possibilities, they are said to be 'alternatives'. In South Africa an 'alternative' position has come to mean a left-wing position. The word is also widely used as an adjective. An 'alternative accountant', for example, has as clients the trade unions and the 'alternative press'. 'Alternative movie makers' make anti-apartheid films. 'Alternative music' in South Africa is counter-hegemonic. 'Alternative doctors' practise community medicine.

In an attack on Gerhard Mare and Georgina Hamilton, authors of An Appetite for Power, Buthelezi uses the word 'alternative' to signify a United Democratic Front and an African National Congress position.

> He described them as 'alternative academics' who have 'a pathological bias' against Inkatha and himself and who give 'paternalistic and uncritical support for all that the UDF, ANC and Cosatu stand for.
> (Weekly Mail, 8 April 1988)

6.1.4 Words become tainted

> Words change their position according to the position held by those who use them. (Pecheux, 1975: 111)

If a word is used regularly to signal a particular position then it becomes associated with that position and from the point of view of other positions tainted. Tainted words signify the other, 'them', and are avoided by 'us'.

Example 5

'Representative' is often used to refer to officials elected by very low percentage polls to serve on apartheid structures. The polls are low as a means of contesting the very existence of these structures and of signalling that the 'representatives' do not represent many people. The

House of Representatives, the 'coloured' house in the tri-cameral Parliament, is a case in point. The word 'representatives' is tainted and for many people signifies collaboration.

6.1.5 Renaming or relexicalization

As words become pejorified, new words are found for old meanings in an attempt to shake off the negative connotations. We saw this in the preceding discussion on the relexicalization of 'bantustan'. Where the social conditions which produced the negative evaluation in the first place remain unchanged, these negative connotations attach to the new word and further relexicalization occurs.

Example 6

Apartheid has been renamed as: separate development, self-determination, co-operative co-existence, own affairs, power sharing.

Example 7

In 1986 the State President proposed a National Council as part of his reform programme. The idea has been rejected by the majority of blacks as an apartheid structure on which they cannot be represented while they remain unenfranchised and while their organisations are banned and their leaders jailed. In April 1988 the State President proposed a change of name for the National Council: The Great Indaba. It is as if he believes that the new name will make the idea more acceptable. News comment explains the State's reasons for choosing this new name.

> "Indaba" is a word of Zulu origin signifying a gathering of acknowledged leaders to dispute, negotiate and finally resolve through consensus the important problems with which their people may be confronted. Over the years the word, retaining its original emphasis on reaching agreement through discussion, has become part of the everyday vocabulary of all South Africa's diverse peoples. It would therefore be appropriate for this peculiarly

> South African term to be adopted to describe the means - a "Great Indaba" -by which the country's peoples will have to overcome the big constitutional challenges that still have to be dealt with. (News Comment, 25 April 1988)

An indaba is a gathering of 'acknowledged leaders'. Acknowledged by whom? The State President seems to be willing to recognise elected black leaders as 'representatives' irrespective of how low the percentage poll might be. To many blacks these 'representatives' would be seen as collaborators or puppets; for many of them the real leaders are in exile or in jail. 'Indaba' is a Zulu word and that is in itself problematic as it emphasises the alliance between the State and Inkatha. Moreover, 'The Great Indaba' is too linguistically similar to 'The Natal Indaba', a gathering of leaders in Natal to propose changes for the government of that province, for the history of that endeavour not to enter the proposed new name. Many people were opposed to that enterprise per se. In addition the government's failure to act on many of the proposals that emerged, suggests that indabas are talking shops and that power rests ultimately with the State.

Language is a minefield. What this attempt at relexicalization fails to recognise is that it is the idea of a National Council that is contested and that an 'unsellable idea' (Tomaselli, Louw and Tomaselli, 1986: 9) by any other name will smell as unacceptable. The State seems to recognise the difficulty attached to the naming of the proposed National Council. In News Comment, 21 June 1988, there is an unstated retraction of the proposed relexicalization.

> It is not the intention that Parliament should be prescriptive in respect of the council. This body, representing a wide spectrum of political views and interests, will itself decide on its own name ....

6.1.6 Overlexicalization

> Overlexicalization is the provision of a large number of synonymous or near-synonymous terms for communication of some specialized area of experience. (Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew, 1979: 211)

It reflects a society's pre-occupation with that area of experience.

Example 8

What word should be used to describe those sectors of the population whose social, political and economic suppression has placed them at a disadvantage vis a vis their more privileged peers? There is a range of terminology and each term suggests a slightly different position. What the terms tend to obscure is that they are generally used to refer to the black population. Most of the terms are adjectives which may or may not be nominalised: disadvantaged, disenfranchised, unenfranchised, deprived, exploited, poor, oppressed. It is not unusual to hear speakers using a number of terms simultaneously. For example a speaker might refer to 'the disadvantaged, disenfranchised and poor majority'. While it is not possible to pin a word definitively to a particular position, 'exploited', for example, is more likely to occur in marxist discourse than in liberal discourse whereas 'deprived' and 'disadvantaged' are more likely to occur in liberal discourse. By using a number of words simultaneously speakers cover a wider range of positions for themselves. They 'play it safe'.

6.1.7 Strategies for resisting classification

Three strategies will be considered here.

1. Words may be co-opted for a different position

Where a word becomes associated with a particular position instead of avoiding the word, speakers from a different position may attempt to reclaim that word for their own

position. This enables them to harness whatever positive evaluation the word carries for their own position, despite the fact that the word is likely to mean something quite different when co-opted by the different position. If the co-option is successful then the word may become tainted for the original position. What is being described is something like a tug-of-war, a struggle between different positions for control over the sign.

Example 9

'Grassroots' is a word that has long been used by United Democratic Front supporters to refer to a form of local democracy where people have a direct say in matters that affect their own lives. Parent-teacher-student associations, area and street committees are examples of grassroots organisations established to deal with issues important to the communities in which these organisations have flourished. They have not been imposed from above but have grown in response to the needs which the communities have identified. Ndebele, 1986, uses 'grassroots' to mean 'rooted in the experience of the people'.

> What we are beginning to witness, now, is a further shift towards the establishment of alternative structures at grassroots level in various communities in the townships and some rural areas. The call for the policy of rendering the townships ungovernable has given way to the need for their governability on foundations rooted in the experience of the people themselves. ... Here new forms of democratic participation are being created out of the practical experience of the township existence. (12)

Local authority elections in South Africa took place on 26 October 1988. Faced with the possibility of an election boycott, the State conducted an extensive campaign to persuade people to vote. Notice how the word 'grassroots' was co-opted to legitimise participation.

> Local government constitutes the very grass roots of democracy - the level at which elected authorities are closest to their voters and have a direct impact on their daily lives through the rates they levy and

> the services and facilities they provide to their respective communities. The October elections will serve to consolidate grass roots democracy in Black communities. (News Comment, 17 June 1988)

'Grassroots' here means elected municipal authorities responsible for services that have a direct impact on the lives of people. The fact that local government in many black townships had already broken down, with whole communities refusing to pay rent or rates, was completely obscured by this discourse.

2. Alternative terminology

People from different positions label the world in different ways. Antagonistic signs struggle for power. Their existence reveals the contradictions and conflicts in society.

Example 10

terrorist	freedom fighter
insurgent, agitator	brother, comrade
the government	the State, the regime
South West Africa	Namibia
riot	uprising
Pheni High School	Nelson Mandela School
free enterprise	capitalism

These signifiers are oppositional in that they refer to the same referent. The same person may be named as a terrorist or as a freedom fighter, depending on the position of the person doing the naming. Let us examine one of these opposing sets of terms in greater detail: insurgent/ agitator and brother/comrade. The State prefers the terms 'insurgent' and 'agitator' because they attribute disruption in society to outside agents. When these same people are called 'comrade' and 'brother' by people who oppose the State, they are semantically encoded as insiders not outsiders: as kith and kin.

Euphemism is a figure of speech which is a particular type of alternative naming. It gives positive names to

unpleasant actions or situations. South African discourse abounds with euphemisms.

Example 11

- The Extension of Universities Act closed the open universities to black students.
- The Abolition of Passes Act extended the system of pass laws.
- The tri-cameral Parliament is in fact a tri-racial Parliament.
- A pre-emptive strike is a bombing raid into another country.

3. Linguistic qualifiers

Linguistic qualifiers are used by addressers to distance themselves from the words they utter; to signal their rejection of the signifier.

Example 12

The following examples have been taken from the progressive press: so-called coloured, supposedly independent states, putatively sovereign states, reputedly independent states, so-called South Africa, so-called Western democracy.

'So-called' is also used by the right to reject the classifications of the left: so-called grey areas, so-called liberation theology, so-called hunger strike, so-called struggle, so-called comrades, so-called one-man-one-vote nonracial democracy.

The use of 'so-called' was parodied in Letters from a Linksfield Liberal. This is testimony to the frequency with which this qualifier is used in current discourse. Referring to one of the character's release from detention, the letter states

> His so-called release was a so-called defeat for the so-called ruling class. The so-called last kicks of a so-called dying horse. (Weekly Mail, 1 August 1986)

In written discourse the same effect can be achieved by placing the disputed terminology within quotation marks.

> The quotes put the term at a distance, declaring it a term of the enemy. (Trew, 1979: 134)

Minogue (1985) writes disparagingly about the use of inverted commas, maintaining that it is a reliable indicator of 'ideological discourse'.

> The page is full of twitches, nudges and winks indicated by quotation marks which do not signify quotation, but rather dissent from, and hostility to the ordinary meaning of a term. The quotation mark is ideology scowling. Equivalent to and sometimes supplemented by expressions like 'so-called', this practice reveals the plight of a thinker forced to use the vocabulary which he seeks to disavow even as he uses it. (Minogue, 1985: 105)

6.2 TENSE AND ASPECT, MODALITY AND VOICE

6.2.1 Tense and aspect

The tense chosen for discourse is highly significant. It is important to remember that tense in English encodes more than simply the time at which an event occurred. Let us examine some hypothetical examples.

(1) The police shoot children in South Africa.

(2) The police shot children in South Africa.

(3) The police have shot children in South Africa.

The use of the present tense in (1) indicates that this is habitual behaviour. In addition, the present tense is used in English for general timeless truths such as 'Water freezes at 0 degrees centigrade'; police action is presented as timeless and the tense encodes a high degree of certainty and truth.

The use of the past tense in (2) indicates an action completed in the past. One can make no inferences about the likelihood or not of this action being repeated in the future.

The use of present perfect aspect in (3) indicates a situation that began in the past and continues into the present. Here we can infer that the action will recur.

The choice of tense is not neutral. An examination of tenses selected can help to establish the position of the text.

Example 13

In Critical linguistics and the teaching of language (1986b), I examined the use of the present tense in a policy statement issued by the University of the Witwatersrand, 20 October 1986, on the disruption of academic meetings.

> The University condemns in the strongest possible terms the disruption of these academic meetings and hereby reaffirms its commitment to ensuring compliance by all its members with universal standards of academic behaviour.

My analysis of the singular, third person, present tense use of 'condemns', attempted to show that the University presents itself as speaking with one unified voice (singular), that the statement is objective (third person impersonality) and that the University habitually condemns such action (present tense). The choice of the present tense, because of its timelessness, signals that this statement is the University's ongoing position.

Third person, present tense is the preferred choice for most academic discourse. This 'style' for academic writing has important effects. The present tense, by suggesting timeless truth, creates an impression of objectivity in academic writing. This is compounded by the use of the third person which hides the addresser as the source of these truths.

Example 14

The use of the present tense reifies events by placing them outside of time and history.

> A squatter camp of 67 shacks, housing at least 300 men, women and children, appears in Lenasia South. (The Star, 13 June 1988: 1)

The present tense use of 'appears' gives no indication of the social, economic or historical forces involved. The shacks appear seemingly out of the blue.

6.2.2 Modality

Modality expresses

> speakers' and writers' attitudes towards themselves, towards their interlocutors, and towards their subject-matter [as well as] their social and economic relationships with the people they address.
>
> (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 200)

Modality is a strong indicator of the power differential in interaction and is revealed by a number of linguistic features.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries encode two kinds of modality: root (social) and epistemic (logical probability). Social modality serves amongst other things to encode the speaker's authority and power. Notice how in the following sets of statements the speaker's authority increases.

> You might/could pass the security bills.
> You should pass the security bills.
> You had better pass the security bills.
> You must pass the security bills.
> You will pass the security bills.

Epistemic modality encodes probability. In the set which follows, notice the increasing certainty in the statements.

> There might/could be a State of Emergency.
> There may be a State of Emergency.
> There should be a State of Emergency.
> There must be a State of Emergency.
> There will be a State of Emergency.

It is no accident that the modal auxiliaries carrying the maximum amount of certainty were chosen for an ultimatum which the government made to Parliament.

> The government has delivered an ultimatum to Parliament: unless the two controversial security bills are passed in time for June 16, a State of Emergency or even martial law will be declared. (Sunday Star, 8 June 1986)

This ultimatum was backed by enough power to justify the use of 'will'. In fact the security bills were not passed by all three houses of Parliament and the government did declare a State of Emergency in June 1986.

There is no one-to-one relationship between high power and the use of strong modal auxiliaries. Where for example power is not questioned, a weaker modal is sufficient to obtain obedience. The speaker may choose to use one and so appear to be less controlling.

Adverbs

Adverbs such as: possibly, maybe, probably, definitely, certainly, hopefully also affect the modality of the utterance by introducing certainty or tentativeness.

Tone (voice inflection)

The modality of spoken utterance is strongly affected by tone. It is possible for example to use a strong modal that is undercut or softened by a hesitant tone of voice.

Example 15

An examination of the modality of the following text will help to ascertain the position of the journalist who wrote it.

> **Teachers' Charter vote could herald new unity**
> The adoption of the Freedom Charter by the 22 000 - strong Cape Teachers' Professional Association heralds an important new alignment in the educational arena and could bring closer the formation of a national, non-racial teachers' union.
> It could also put the association - which represents the majority of teachers employed in coloured schools - on a collision course with the government ... The decision represents a turning point for an organisation which once seemed willing to work with the government to achieve objectives such as improved service conditions for its members, rather than broad political goals.
> (Weekly Mail, 1 July 1988)

In the headline the writer could have said that the vote 'heralds' a new unity, instead she says that it 'could herald new unity' using a low certainty modal. Her subsequent use of 'could' raises further doubt about the formation of a new teachers' union. She suggests the possibility of conflict with the government but does not predict it with confidence as she would have had she said, 'It will put them on a collision course with the government'. This is a writer who, as we will see, supports the new developments but is unwilling to be prematurely optimistic. Particularly interesting is her use of 'seemed' in the third paragraph. The organisation she refers to has worked with the government in the past. We can infer this from her reference to negotiations with regard to conditions of service. To state this outright would be an overt criticism calling into question the organisation's bona fides. That she has misgivings about the new alignment is signified by her use of the low probability modal, 'could'. She is reluctant to increase the delicacy of the situation, so she reduces the certainty of their previous co-operation with the government by saying that they 'seemed willing to work

with the government'. This is a clear indication of her position: she does not wish to jeopardise the new unity.

6.2.3 Voice

The choice of active or passive voice in discourse bears close scrutiny. The effects of passive transformations will be explored by examining hypothetical examples.

(4) The man raped the woman.
(5) The woman was raped by the man.
(6) The woman was raped.

In both (5) and (6) the object (or patient) of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence. Emphasis shifts from the agent to the patient. The patient is foregrounded and in (5) the subject or agent of the sentence is backgrounded. In (6) the agent is completely suppressed. Passive constructions allow for the deletion of agency. It is important to see whether the agent can be recovered from the context and if not, whose interests are served by the deletion of agency.

In (4) there is an emphasis on the action. In (5) and (6), with the introduction of the verb 'to be', we are presented with the state of the patient rather than with the action of the agent. This is perhaps more clearly illustrated in the following example:

(7) She fills the bucket.
(8) The bucket is filled.

This de-emphasising of the action makes the action less immediate and the agent less responsible. The shift from action to state often serves to reify the state.

Example 16

The following example is taken from the rules of a primary school.

> These are the rules that children are expected to adhere to. ... Such rules are characterised by common sense and what is deemed in the overall welfare of the children. A few of the rules are:

> When a child meets a teacher...the child is to greet the person in an appropriate manner (e.g. "Good morning, Sir");
>
> Boys stand aside for girls and adults to pass through doorways. (Granville, 1987: 32)

The three passive constructions ('are expected', 'are characterised' and 'is deemed') are all presented as outside of time. Furthermore who 'expects', 'characterises' and 'deems' is concealed by the deletion of agency. The rules are presented as common sense, as universally accepted values, rather than as ideological constructs. The first rule, concerning the appropriate greeting of a teacher, encodes the power structure in the school signalled by the deferential 'sir' and the second rule encodes 'manners' as related to sexist constructions of men and women in society.

Nominalisations

In this kind of transformation verbs are converted into nouns. Nouns have no agents, no tense, no modality and no voice.

Example 17

(9) The renewal of the state of emergency. (News Comment, 13 June 1988)
(10) Detentions have taken place under the state of emergency. (News Comment, 9 June 1988)
(11) The incitement in some quarters for a work stayaway... (News Comment, 7 June 1988)

'Renewal', 'detentions', 'incitement' and 'stayaway' are all instances of nominalisations. They are actions presented as outside of time and without actors. The nominalisation in (10) is reinforced by the use of an agentless passive.

6.3 PERSON

Discourse may be written in first, second or third person. Where discourse is written in third person, the author is less visible than in first person discourse. In Example 16, I wrote

(13) The following example is taken from the rules of a primary school.

I did not write

(14) I have taken the following example from the rules of a primary school.

(14) makes explicit my authorship; it foregrounds me as the person who has selected an example to illustrate my point in order to further my argument. In order to achieve the anonymity of third person in (13), it was necessary for me to use an agentless passive ('is taken'). Third person discourse which uses passive constructions extensively, is the preferred style for academic discourse. By backgrounding the author, the authority of the text is increased: the text sounds more objective, less the view of one person. This dissimulation is compounded by a careful examination of the source of the school rules example. It is attributed to Granville, 1987. An examination of the bibliography reveals that this appeared in her Bachelor of Education long essay. In fact I took this example, not from the school rules but of the school rules, from the work of one of my students, acknowledging it of course; I am playing the academic discourse game by the rules. One has to be a skilful reader of academic discourse to know what is obscured by (13). Furthermore, neither Granville nor I revealed the name of the school. In so doing we were protecting the interests of the school.

When combined with the use of the present historic tense (See 6.2.1 Example 11) which helps to reify the content, academic discourse sounds more authoritative than it actually is.

Example 18

Muller, 1986, flouts the third person convention for academic discourse in his Masters dissertation.

> My main interest was in black schools: this was where my experience and puzzlements lay ... I therefore decided to undertake my first case-study in a white school. There were several reasons for this. First, I had never set foot in a white school in South Africa ... these schools run a good deal more regularly than their black counterparts. Since I pass for white, I would not need any special permission to be in the school neighbourhood in the first place. It was definitely a better idea to undertake the less physically accessible case later when I had a bit more experience. (38-39)

Muller uses the first person in this vein throughout his dissertation. He runs the risk of other academics reading him as simplistic or arrogant. His dissertation does not sound 'objective' or 'scientific' but anecdotal. The question of whether it is in fact possible for a text to be 'objective' has been raised earlier in this dissertation. Because all discourse is positioned, I suggest that Muller's dissertation is probably no less 'objective' than many other dissertations which sound more academic and less naive.

First person plural raises other important questions in relation to language and power. When addressers use 'we', they presume to speak for themselves and for others. 'We' often implicates the addressee. The power and right to speak for others is assumed by the addresser who uses first person plural.

The selection of person is a linguistic feature which may signify power relations and which should therefore be scrutinised when deconstructing texts.

6.4 REFERENCE WORDS

In the discussion of person, reference was made to the inclusive pronoun 'we'. Often pronouns are used to signal exclusion and to set up the distinction between 'them' and 'us', essential for the creation of the other. Pronouns are not the only words which signal inclusion and exclusion.

Example 19

'Everybody', ostensibly an inclusive term, is used in the following example to refer to white South Africans only.

> Everybody - by that I mean all the whites - so desperately want a step in the right direction ... (Van Zyl Slabbert, The Star, 9 February 1986)

Because the term 'South Africans' often excludes black South Africans, an intention to include them in the term has to be specifically indicated.

Example 20

> For the overwhelming mass of South Africans of all communities ... (News Comment, 24 June 1988, my emphasis)
>
> But for the ordinary South African - the law-abiding citizen, Black and White ...
> (News Comment, 13 June 1988, my emphasis)

6.5 AMBIGUITY

Ambiguity is clearly tied to the plurality of meaning and all words, inherently polysemous, change their meanings according to the socio-historical conditions of their utterance. It is possible for addressers to use ambiguity deliberately in order to obscure meaning. It is important

to examine such ambiguity in order to unveil the hidden meanings.

Example 21

> The State President never said 'apartheid is dead'; he said 'we have outgrown the outmoded concept of apartheid'. This could mean one of two things: that we are now looking for a more adaptable concept of apartheid, or that we have actually left behind apartheid in any form antiquated or not.
> (Van Zyl Slabbert, Sunday Star, 9 February 1986)

Using Ricoeur's concept of 'split reference', Thompson (1984) suggests that

> the terms of a discourse carry out their ideological role by explicitly referring to one thing and implicitly referring to another, by entangling these multiple referents in a way which serves to maintain relations of domination. (137 - 138)

Example 22

The term 'universal franchise' is historically associated with a struggle for 'one person one vote' in a unitary system. When the South African government claims to be moving towards universal franchise, it envisages a political system in which everyone will be allowed to vote but for separate and racially divided structures which will ensure the continuation of white domination. The tri-cameral Parliament is an example of such a structure.

This point is illustrated by the following satire in the Weekly Mail

> Chris [Heunis] presented his new constitutional plan which would involve the establishment of another 212 Parliaments. This would enable every community to have autonomy over its own affairs

and every person in a community could have a vote. 'In fact', he explained, 'there is no reason why we can't give everyone two or three votes if we want. That will be even more democratic than anywhere in the world where one vote seems to be the average.' (14 March 1986)

6.6 NEGATION

Negative semantic space is a concept posited by Stanley (1977), a feminist linguist. Positive semantic space is unmarked and reserved for dominant groups in society. Linguistically speaking, unmarked terms are reserved for the norm; marked terms suggest deviation from the norm. In expressions such as 'non-white', 'non-European' and 'non-standard', white, European and standard are taken to represent the norm.

Example 23

> **Water-slide for 'swimmers' only**
> The "whites only" sign at the Muizenberg water-slide has been taken down but the owner, Mr Richard Clayton, has warned that "non-swimmers" will be barred from using the main chute.
> "Unfortunately 90 per cent of non-whites can't swim and I can't allow them to use the big slide if they are going to get into trouble in the water", he said. ...
> "I will reserve the right of admission to the main slide and ask people who look like non-swimmers if they can swim before I let them in".
> Mr Clayton denied that this meant that blacks would be automatically excluded.
> (Cape Times, 10 December 1985)

While denying his racism, Mr Clayton uses the term 'non-whites' (rather than 'blacks') a clear indicator of his position. The desegregation of swimming facilities in South Africa, including beaches, is a volatile issue. The Reverend Allan Hendrickse, a cabinet minister from the House of Representatives, incurred the wrath of the State

President when he went for an illegal swim on the whites-only beach in Port Elizabeth. That is some of the context necessary for understanding the cartoon which appeared in The Star, 5 May 1988.

Juxtaposed with the article Water slide for swimmers only, the meaning of the cartoon shifts. Tri-cameral cabinet posts are available for non-swimmers in the Clayton sense of the word i.e. 'non-whites'.

Negation is a linguistic transformation which gives rise to an alternative surface form beneath which the underlying positive form is still visible. 'Even with a simple negative the positive form must be understood so that the hearer knows what is being denied' (Hodge and Kress, 1979). In de-constructing the use of the negative, it is useful to recover the positive to explore what is in fact being denied. Professor Tobias, in his Senate Special Lecture, 19 August 1987, makes conscious use of the

underlying positive form. He uses the negative because he knows that it evokes the underlying positive in the minds of those whom he addresses.

> I shall not be speaking tonight of the winter of our discontent, of security spies on campus, of ministerial threats to universities, of academic boycotts from within or without, of police incursions on to our campuses, of agents provocateurs in our midst, of pressures on academic freedom constituted by poison-pen letter-writing campaigns, of intolerance, doctrinaire ideologies and aggressive confrontations and the threats they constitute to freedom of speech and expression, nor of the self-imposed blinkers, or external sharp-toothed intimidations so inimical to the spirit of the university. I'm not even going to mention these things.

When in October 1986 the State President said that there was no such thing as a 'grey area', the denial itself called into being the possibility of their existence. Now proposals to change the Group Areas Act acknowledge the existence of racially mixed areas. These it is mooted, might become 'free settlement areas'.

6.7 INDIRECT SPEECH, FREE INDIRECT SPEECH, DIRECT SPEECH

In an article entitled Free indirect speech in a fettered and insecure society, McKenzie (1987) shows that free indirect speech stands between the immediacy of direct speech and the distancing in time and place of indirect speech. Free indirect speech achieves this by adhering to only some of the rules for transforming direct speech into indirect speech. The more rules it adheres to, the closer free indirect speech is to indirect speech. The fewer rules it adheres to, the closer free indirect speech is to direct speech. Free indirect speech thus operates on a cline from direct to indirect speech. In analysing the booklet Nusas Talks to the ANC, McKenzie shows how the use of free indirect speech preserves the flavour and essence

of what was said while 'coping with the ban on direct quotation of the organisation'(2). When examining reports in which people are quoted, it is useful first of all to see who is quoted. The fact that the South African Broadcasting Corporation regularly quotes Jonas Savimbi reveals its support for the State's alliance with Unita in Angola. The position of the report may also be indicated by an analysis of whether people are quoted in direct speech, indirect speech or free indirect speech. Direct speech allows those quoted to speak for themselves; indirect speech gives more control to the reporter.

Example 24

In No-prints granny tries the writer's sympathies are with Mrs Hlalele.

No-prints granny tries

THE Vaal Triangle granny without fingerprints, Mrs Selina Hlalele (78), yesterday made yet another attempt to obtain an identity book but it's anyone's guess if she will be lucky this time.

She said: "It is important that I get an ID because only then will I be able to apply for my pension. I have not been getting any pension for almost 10 years because I do not have a reference or identity book."

By LANGA SKOSANA

Mrs Hlalele's pension stopped when she lost her reference book. She could not get a duplicate because she no longer had any fingerprints.

Officials told her no one could help as positive identity was needed before any payout was made.

Yesterday a senior official of the Department of Home Affairs in Sebokeng, Mr C Scheepers, sent another set of Mrs Hlalele's prints to Pretoria.

He said she would know the outcome this week.

Officials from the Department of Home Affairs are reported in free indirect speech close to the indirect end of the continuum. Mrs. Hlalele is reported in direct speech which gives greater immediacy to her plight.

6.8 SUPRA SENTENTIAL ELEMENTS OF DISCOURSE

6.8.1 Sequence

The order in which sentences occur affects meaning significantly.

(15) The police opened fire. The students threw stones.

means something different from

(16) The students threw stones. The police opened fire.

Despite the omission of conjunctions, sequence alone suggests different causality in (15) and (16).

Example 25

In describing the battle of Vegkop, a Standard 4 history textbook still used in schools, provides the following sequence of 'information'.

> The trekkers hurried into the laager and closed the entrance. All around were the Matabele hordes, sharpening their assegais, killing animals and drinking the raw blood. Sarel Celliers offered up a prayer.
>
> When the enemy made a savage attack, the defenders fired volley upon volley into their ranks. All helped. The women and children, including Paul Kruger, loaded extra guns and handed them to the men. After a fierce battle the Matabele fled. The voortrekkers gave thanks to God for their deliverance. (Venter, Smit and Grobbelaar, no date: 61)

This passage is perhaps most striking for its construction of the Matabele as the other. This is achieved by naming the Matabele as 'hordes', whose savagery is clearly evidenced by their 'killing animals' and their 'drinking the raw blood'. Reasons for such behaviour are not included but are implied. This naming occurs prior to the description of the battle so that one's sympathies lie with the trekkers; we have been told what savages they are

up against. What the trekkers, epitomising civilisation by their praying and their co-operative behaviour, did, is introduced after we are told that 'the enemy made a savage attack'. The order reinforces the naming of the trekkers as 'defenders' rather than as aggressors. The construction of the Matabele as uncivilised barbarians legitimates the trekker victory and this is confirmed by the final sentence which attributes their victory to God. The unstated presupposition of the text is that God is on the side of right.

6.8.2 The logical organisation of a text

The logic of a text operates above the level of the sentence and serves to position it. In Example 26 faulty logic is used to defend the media regulations.

Example 26

> The words "alternative media" have become part of our contemporary lexicon; yet, precisely how they should be defined is not certain. The very words imply that the alternative media stand apart from the established or conventional media, which traditionally are an integral and necessary component of a democratic society. To the extent that the individual members or sections of the alternative media stand apart from democracy and, indeed, seek to undermine or destroy democratic society, they must be regarded as part of the revolutionary onslaught that has been mounted against South Africa; and it is precisely media action that promotes a revolutionary climate that the media regulations published in the Government Gazette last Friday are intended to counter.
>
> (News Comment, 31 August 1987)

This paragraph is presented as containing a valid argument, but the logic is suspect. The opening declaration states that it is difficult to define the 'alternative media'. Despite this declaration, a high

certainty modal is used to assert that the alternative media ' must be regarded as part of the revolutionary onslaught'. This is qualified by the introductory words 'to the extent that'. It is not unlikely that this qualification is forgotten by the addressees as the argument proceeds.

The proof that the alternative media 'seek to undermine or destroy democratic society' is based, in part, on the following invalid syllogism.

1 All conventional media are an integral and necessary component of a democratic society.
2 All alternative media stand apart from conventional media.
3 Therefore all alternative media stand apart from democracy.

Reducing this syllogism to symbols helps to clarify the fallacy.

1 All A are B.
2 No C are A
3 Therefore no C are B.

If we substitute other concepts for the symbols, the poor argument is immediately apparent.

1 All cats are animals.
2 No dogs are cats.
3 Therefore no dogs are animals.

Even without querying the truth or falsity of the assertions about the alternative media, there are problems with the logic.

The invalid conclusion of the argument i.e. that 'alternative media stand apart from democracy' is then equated with further assertions by a process of substituting apparently synonomous reformulations. 'Alternative media seek to undermine and destroy democracy' and 'alternative media must be regarded as part of the revolutionary onslaught that has been mounted

against South Africa' replace the conclusion, as if they were semantically equivalent. The text slides from one phrase to the next, dissimulating the fact that they are unsubstantiated assertions.

6.8.3 Turn-taking, interruption and topic control

The number of turns, who interrupts, who speaks for other people, who hesitates and who controls the topic are good indicators of power relations in natural conversation.

Example 27

Woman: Well, you know, in a sense, at -a- at a really personal point of view, when one thinks about individuals, I agree with you about applying this boycott selectively. On the other hand, if one thinks about action and really having an effect and an impact, it does seem to me as though if the academic boycott were applied both ways - both for people coming in to South Africa or wanting to go out into the broader world - if it were applied totally and if there just were a total boycott somehow I think that might have more eff- impact and -um- the establishment might take greater notice of that since we would then be in danger of total isolation-

Man: Is that actually a viewpoint that you are putting forward?

Woman: Ja- I'm- I'm- I'm considering that as a -as a-

Man: Could I just ask you something- I take it you are also in favour of total sanctions against South Africa -of total- I never knew you were. And -er- but- bringing the country to economic ruin.

Woman: Well-

Man: You are in favour of that?

Woman: I'm not- I'm not-

Man: May I tell your husband?

In this extract recorded in 1987, the man interrupts the woman four times; he speaks for her, telling her what she thinks about total sanctions; he changes the topic from total boycott to total sanctions. She is more hesitant than he is and by the end of this extract is on the defensive having to deny the man's accusations. Finally, the man threatens to tell her husband about her alleged view, which he in fact articulated for her. These features are a clear indication of his power over her in this interaction.

6.9 CRITICAL LINGUISTICS AND THE DE-CONSTRUCTION OF DISCOURSE

This paper has focused on selected linguistic features and on some of the specifics of textual analysis. This micro perspective, which at times ignores content and which removes linguistic items from context, both the discoursal context and the socio-historical context, is the very antithesis of what is understood by critical linguistic practice. It is important that these parts come together in the de-construction of texts.

Critical linguistics provides new questions to ask of discourse; a way of focusing on specific linguistic features in order to ascertain how they contribute to the ideological construction of the discourse. These new questions lead to new and different insights. Readers are, however, still left with the difficulty of interpreting these insights. Consider the selection and combination of the separate linguistic features in the following introduction to an advertisement placed in the biggest Sunday newspaper by the State President, 2 February 1986.

REVOLUTIONARIES MAY
STAMP THEIR FEET.
THE COMMUNISTS MAY
SCREAM THEIR LIES.
OUR ENEMIES MAY TRY
TO UNDERMINE US.
BUT HERE IS THE
REALITY.

Critical linguistics can provide us with the tools to pick out the words used to classify the opponents of the state: 'revolutionaries', 'communists', 'enemies'. It can point to the way in which pronouns have been divided into 'them' and 'us'. It can focus attention on the low certainty modal 'may' and it can highlight the ambiguity between the 'may' of possibility and the 'may' of permission. It can alert us to the uses of the definite article. The moment we attempt to explain the effect of these selections, we enter the area of interpretation. Interpretation has to take cognisance of the complexity of the interaction of a all the linguistic elements as well as the complexity of the interaction of all the social relations in which they are embedded. It is for this reason that critical linguistics can only offer a starting point for oppositional reading, a way in.

It is easy to resist discourse that differs substantially from one's own position. It is much more difficult to resist discourse that one agrees with. Ideology is, of course, most powerful when it is invisible, when it appears as natural and inevitable, when its constructedness is hidden. A critical focus on separate linguistic elements provides a means of introducing cracks in apparently seamless discoursal constructions, a means of moving towards oppositional reading.

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Appendix:
Critical Linguistics: A Starting Point for Oppositional Reading

ANALYSING DISCOURSE TO UNCOVER POWER RELATIONS: QUESTIONS TO ASK OF THE TEXT

1 CONTEXT Who is the addresser? Who is the addressee? What is their relationship? What is the socio-political-historical context? Who is saying what to whom, when, where and why? What is the function or purpose of the discourse? Whose interests are served?

2 PLURALITY OF MEANING How is meaning affected by the position of the speaker/addresser? How is it affected by the positions of the addressees?

3 ASSUMPTIONS What is presented as natural, as taken for granted? What are the premises on which the discourse rests?

4 WHAT POSITION DOES THE TEXT REQUIRE/COERCE THE READER TO TAKE? Who is dominant? Who is subordinate? Is the language sexist, racist, middle class? What is the reader expected to believe, agree with? In whose interests? Who benefits?

5 SELECTION What vocabulary, tense, voice, modality, person etc have been selected? How do these reflect the position of speaker? Whose interests are served?

6 OMISSIONS/SILENCES What has been left out? Why? Whose interests are served?

7 CLASSIFICATIONS Naming, renaming, resisting of naming - what do these reveal about the position of the addresser? Ambiguity and euphemism - what is hidden? Whose interests are served? Pronouns - who is included? Who is excluded?

8 TRANSFORMATIONS Whose interests are served by the deletion of agency in nominalisations and passivisations? What possibilities are denied by negations?

9 MODALITY How does this affect the authority of the speaker or the certainty of the utterance?

10 METAPHORS Are they culturally loaded? Whose values are assumed? What do they lead the addressee to infer?

11 STRUCTURE How is meaning affected by the sequencing of information? Are the logical arguments valid?

12 FORM AND LAYOUT What do these serve to foreground and background? Who benefits?